

consumer news

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE

Office of Consumer Affairs

Virginia H. Knauer, Director

Consumer meeting

Agenda for **Food & Drug Administration's** (FDA) regular consumer representative ad hoc meeting includes the unveiling of a new program that would poll consumers in-rating FDA's priority programs—such as food contaminants & food additives. Other issues on the agenda will be a discussion of the national immunization program for swine flu & a briefing on medical device legislation. Meeting will be held at 1 p.m. Sept. 8 in Room 1409, 200 "C" St. SW, Washington, DC 20852; telephone: 301-443-5006.

Recalls

PERCOLATORS — Corning Glass Works has announced the recall of approximately 360,000 "Electromatic" percolators, manufactured during 1974, because of a possible defect that could cause the glass-ceramic pot & the stainless steel collar to separate. Company has notified **Consumer Product Safety Commission** (CPSC) of its voluntary recall plan, which will provide for a cost-free replacement of the product. What to do: To find out if you may have one of the recalled percolators, examine the pot behind the handle for the model numbers E 1210, E 1210-4 or E 1210-8. If you find one of these numbers, examine the stainless steel band, at the right of the handle, for another number. If the pot has a number here, disregard the recall notice. However, if no number appears on the band, check inside the pot where cup-capacity marks are shown with dots. If there is a dot to the left of the dot designating either the 8 or 10-cup capacity, then the percolator is included in the recall. If you have one of the recalled models, go to a Corning Electromatic retailer to get written instructions for returning the coffeemaker. After following these instructions, a replacement model will be returned to you, along with a check for postage & insurance. Most retailers should have received these instruction sheets by July 7, but if you need to get one directly, write to Consumer Service Department, E-1, Corning Glass Works, Corning, NY 14830.

TRUCKS—Ford Motor Co. has announced recall of over 10,800 1976 model F-250 & 4-wheel drive light trucks because of a possibility of a partial loss of braking power. Owners of the affected vehicles will be contacted directly through a notification letter and instructed as to what to do. However, for more information about the recall, consumers can contact **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** (NHTSA), Washington, DC 20590 (in some eastern states, call toll-free 800-424-0123; elsewhere call non toll-free: (202-426-0123).

Energy update

Here are some of the findings in **Federal Energy Administration's** mid-1976 report "The Energy Situation":

- US crude oil production dropped in March to its lowest point in more than a decade (8.1 million barrels per day), but the situation will reverse itself in late 1977 when Alaskan oil begins flowing to the lower 48 states. Decline in domestic crude oil production has slowed, but with higher prices, more new well footage has been drilled this year than in any of the last 3 years.

- Improving economic situation this year has increased demand for oil imports. Arab OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) share of oil imports has increased to 37%, up from 22% before the oil embargo of 1973. Total OPEC share of imports now is 82%, compared with 70% in pre-embargo days.

- Domestic oil consumption declined in 1974 & 1975 due to the slowdown in the economy and also because of the conservation effects of higher prices. As the economy turned upward in 1976, demand for petroleum products increased by about 4% through the first half of the year as compared to the same period in 1975.

- Gasoline demand rose 4.8% in the first half of 1976, but US refinery capacity appears sufficient to meet increasing demands for gasoline & other products. (Car fuel efficiency increased by 12% from model year 1974 to 1975; increase could be as high as 13% for 1976 model year cars.)

- Natural gas production will continue to decline in the next few years but could increase to about 0.62 trillion cubic meters (tcm) (22 trillion cubic feet—tcf) in 1985 if prices are deregulated (1975 production was 0.57 tcm—20.1 tcf). Under current **Federal Power Commission** (FPC) regulation, natural gas production could decline to about 0.51 tmc (18 tcf) in 1985. Recently announced FPC price increase could increase production to over 0.59 tcm (21 tcf) in 1985.

- Production of electricity, which leveled off in 1973, began to grow again in 1975 at the rate of 2% a year.

- Nuclear power plants are expected to number 170 by 1985. If this schedule does not slip, the FEA's goal of 26% of total electricity production from nuclear energy by 1985 can be reached.

- Coal production has remained about level during the past 5 years but should increase by about 31.8 million metric tonnes (35 million tons) in 1976 for a total of 612 million metric tonnes (675 million tons) of coal produced in 1976.

Still time to comment

Here's a reminder that Sept. 17 is the deadline for commenting on **Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard** (FMVSS) 208—what to do about air bags & seat belts.

At **CONSUMER NEWS** deadline, **Transportation Dept.** had received over 2,000 comments on the various courses of action Transportation might take on the air bag question. Over 93% of the comments received were from individual consumers. Nature of the comments, whether for or against passive restraints, will be evaluated during the rulemaking process.

On Aug. 3, Transportation held a public hearing in Washington, DC, to hear viewpoints on the future of occupant crash systems. At the hearing, those

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Consumer groups get Federal funds to help them 'speak up'

Magnuson-Moss Warranty—Federal Trade Improvement Act permits the **Federal Trade Commission** to pay the expenses of consumer groups (& certain others) who participate in FTC procedures to establish trade regulations. However, the law does not give FTC a "blank check" to hand to anyone who wants to testify at an FTC hearing or to file detailed, expert comments. FTC can only compensate consumer groups & others if (1) the participation will represent an interest or point of view that would not otherwise be adequately represented; (2) this different point of view is necessary for a fair decision in FTC's issuing a specific regulation; & (3) the consumer groups or others could not afford the cost of being involved in specific FTC regulation matters.

So far, FTC's **Bureau of Consumer Protection** has received 54 applications for these Federal funds. Applications have been from consumers, consumer groups & industry. Of these applications, FTC has approved 31 from consumer groups (some organizations filed for more than one grant to cover costs of specific issues or of a specific hearing about a proposed regulation) & one from a consumer (representing the interest of Illinois consumers concerning vocational schools). FTC has rejected 15 applications, & it has not decided on 7 applications. FTC's emphasis in making grants is on consumer groups because they are organized for specific purposes & represent specific points of view. However, individual consumers will be considered for grants if they meet all the requirements—especially the representation of a point of view that is not already represented by a consumer group or an industry group or a particular business.

Those receiving funds must use them to pay (1) lawyer's fees (for legal research & preparation of legal statements for presentation to FTC); (2) travel & hotel expenses for attending FTC hearings in Washington or FTC's regional offices; & (3) staff salaries & overhead expenses associated with a specific FTC matter.

FTC's funds are now limited to participation in proceedings about 10 proposed regulations. In the future, funds will be available for participation in other proposed regulations. In October, FTC is expected to publish application guidelines & application forms. Until then, consumers & others can get details about applications from FTC's *Rules of Practice*: Rule 1.17. This rule is available in *Federal Register*: Aug. 13, 1975; pages 33966-33968. It is also available from Public Reference Branch, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580.

APPLICANT	REQUEST	GRANT
• Proposed regulation about vocational schools		
Consumer Action	\$ 24,171.00	\$ 25,015.00
Joel M. Platt of Illinois	7,017.00	5,460.00
• Proposed regulation about unfair credit practices		
National Consumer Law Center	120,000.00	91,020.00
• Proposed regulation about mobile homes		
Center for Auto Safety	38,209.00	19,048.00
• Proposed regulation about food advertising		
Consumers Union	8,793.20	7,360.00
Council on Children, Media & Advertising	52,400.00	42,090.00
National Consumers Congress	7,334.00	9,295.00
• Proposed regulation about prescription drugs		
National Council of Senior Citizens	9,227.00	2,070.00
• Proposed regulation about hearing aids		
National Council of Senior Citizens	43,026.00	44,106.00
National Council of Senior Citizens	8,100.00	8,100.00
• Proposed regulation about funeral industry practices		
Arkansas Consumer Research	7,676.00	6,653.00
California Citizens Action Group	13,200.00	13,548.00
Central Area Motivation Program	9,792.00	7,410.00
Consumer Affairs Committee, Greater Washington Chapter, Americans for Democratic Action, & National Council of Senior Citizens Inc.	13,138.00	8,315.00
Consumer Federation of America	26,024.50	11,328.50
Continental Association of Funeral & Memorial Societies	16,580.00	17,170.00
National Council of Senior Citizens	528.00	528.00
New York Public Interest Research Group Inc.	8,557.00	8,377.00
• Proposed regulation about protein supplements		
Consumer Action	15,128.00	15,507.00
Consumer Action Now	15,200.00	12,710.00
Consumer Cooperative of Berkeley Inc.	5,014.00	3,607.00
• Proposed regulation about preservation of consumers' claims & defenses		
National Consumer Law Center	3,193.00	3,093.25
• Proposed regulation about ophthalmic goods & services		
Arkansas Community Organizations for Reform	1,962.00	1,828.00
California Citizen Action Group	31,992.00	32,672.00
Consumer Action	38,630.00	37,766.00
Consumer Affairs Committee, D.C. Chapter, ADA	11,322.00	6,652.00
New York Public Interest Research Group Inc.	12,665.00	12,575.00

For more information, contact Bonnie Naradzay, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580; telephone 202-523-3436.

In the kitchen

Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has reached agreement with **Food & Drug Administration (FDA)** concerning the jurisdiction over such food-related articles as pressure cookers, slow cookers, refrigerators, freezers & home canning equipment. Agreement was necessary because of the uncertainty concerning which agency had jurisdiction to deal with hazards of food spoilage resulting from home canning lids that fail to seal properly. [CONSUMER NEWS: July 15].

Under the CPSC & FDA agreement, articles used by consumers for preparation or storage of foods are under the jurisdiction of CPSC. If food becomes contaminated as a result of a substance in the container, FDA has the jurisdiction to eliminate the hazard. For more information or complaints to CPSC, call 800-638-2666 (in Maryland, call: 800-492-2937). For more information or complaints to FDA, contact Dr. Ruth White, Office of Consumer Inquiries, Food & Drug Administration, Rockville, MD 20852, or call 301-443-3170.

Vehicle safety investigations

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is investigating 7 safety problems. Investigation does not mean that there is a defect in each case listed but that a safety related problem has been reported. In each instance, NHTSA wants to find the cause of the problem & how it can be remedied.

STATUS	CASE	MAKE & MODEL	YEAR	COMPONENT	POSSIBLE PROBLEM
New	A6-10	Fiat X1/9	1974-75	accelerator cable	malfunction
New	A6-11	International Harvester Loadstar and Cargostar	1975	air supply lines/valves	routing of air supply lines/valves in contact with frame
New	A6-12	Datsun 510	1971	gasoline leakage	rubber plug and clamp used to close return line at the fuel line vead may deteriorate and crack
New	A6-13	American Motors Matador	1975	carburetor	failure of carburetor secondary throttle lockout lever
New	A6-14	Harley Davidson motorcycle SXT-125	1975	frame	defective
New	A6-15	Sebring Vanguard CitiCars	1974	cylinder check valve	failure of master cylinder check valve
New	A6-18	General Motors Chevrolet, Buick & Oldsmobile	1975	spare tire	failure of spare tire hold-down hook

Consumers with any of the problems with the above makes & models may give NHTSA useful information by contacting National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Transportation Dept., Washington, DC 20590; telephone: 800-424-9393 (in Washington metropolitan area: 426-0123). Give make, model, year & serial number.

New Federal publications

The Federal Government is making available some new publications of interest to older consumers: 1) **Health, Education & Welfare Dept.'s (HEW) Administration on Aging (AOA)** has published a booklet called *You, the Law & Retirement* which can be ordered by sending 70¢ to Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 (No. 071-062-00003-4); 2) **Labor Dept. (DOL)** has prepared *The Law Against Age Discrimination in Employment* which you can get free from the Wage & Hour Division, Labor Dept., Washington, DC 20210 (publication 1303); & 3) the **President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports & AOA** have published *The Fitness Challenge—in the Later Years* which details an exercise program for senior citizens. It can be obtained by sending 75¢ to Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 (No. 017-062-0009-3).

Lightning strikes

Lightning kills more people in this country than tornadoes, floods or hurricanes. But according to **National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**, many people do not know a few simple procedures that could save their lives during an electrical storm. Accordingly, NOAA's **Weather Service & Environmental Data Service** offers this list of safety rules for avoiding injury or death from lightning:

- Learn to recognize the signs of an oncoming thunderstorm—such as "thunderhead" clouds, distant rumbles of thunder & occasional flashes of lightning.

- When a thunderstorm threatens, get inside your home or a large building or inside an all-metal (not a convertible) car. An enclosed truck or other vehicle makes an excellent shelter.

- Avoid using the telephone, except during emergencies.

- If you are outside when a thunderstorm begins, with no time to reach a safe building or an automobile, NOAA has these suggestions:

- Avoid areas projecting above the surrounding landscape, such as isolated trees or small sheds in open areas.

- Stay away from open water, which can carry electrical current, & from metal equipment (tractors, bicycles & golf carts) as well as metallic fences, clothes lines & rails.

- In a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees. In open areas, go to a low place such as a ravine or valley.

- If isolated in a level field & you feel your hair stand on end (indicating lightning is about to strike), drop to your knees & bend forward, putting your hands on your knees. This is safer than lying down because you keep low to the ground, but only a small area of your body is in contact with the ground.

- If someone in your group or near you is struck by lightning, get him medical attention as soon as possible.

For more information about lightning & safety tips, write the National Weather Service, Public Affairs Office, 8060 13th St., Silver Spring, MD 20910.

S-p-r-e-a-d-i-n-g the word

Consumer News Inc. has published *Help: The Useful Almanac*. Book gives information for consumers on where to go for help on just about anything. Some topics listed on the contents page are: Getting Help Outside Government, Getting Help from Government, Appliances, Clothing & Furnishings, Housing & Land, Transportation & Travel, Death & Burial, Banking & Borrowing, Insurance & Pensions, Charities, Taxes, Food, Health Care, Hazardous Products, Energy Conservation & Alternatives, Utilities, Automobiles & Communications. To order, send \$4.95 to Consumer News Inc., 813 National Press Bldg., Washington, DC 20045.

Do you read me?

Here is a roundup of the latest CB (citizens band radio) news from the **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)**:

- Call signs for CBers have new format: 4 letters & 4 digits. Previously these call signs had a 3-letter & 4-digit format. FCC recently began issuing call signs with the new format although it adopted the new format in April.

- As of Jan 1, 1977, CB units will have access to 40 channels—an increase from the present 23 channels. New channels will begin at 27.235 kHz & proceed through 27.405 kHz with a spacing of 10 kHz between channels. FCC is prohibiting the use add-on devices to increase the frequency range of CBs now in use. However, manufacturers may modify their stock of 23-channel units to cover the new channels before sale.

- As of Jan. 1, 1977, CB units must be sold with a copy of Part 95 of FCC rules that explains CB operating procedure & FCC Forms 505 & 555-B for license. Now manufacturers are not required to provide the rules and & license forms.

- CB units sold after Dec. 31 will have to have a serial number engraved on the chassis. This identification requirement is to help trace stolen CBs. (CBers should record the serial number & keep in a safe place away from the CB unit—not in a glove compartment, for example.)

For more information about these changes, contact Juanita Altschuler, Amateur & Citizens Division, Federal Communications Commission, Washington, DC 20554; telephone: 202-632-7520.

Still time to comment

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opposed to requiring air bags in cars included representatives of 4 domestic & 3 foreign car makers, a safety belt trade association & several individual consumers. Among those in favor of requiring air bags were several insurance companies, air bag manufacturing companies, consumer organizations, & individual consumers.

In the meantime, Transportation has extended until Aug. 31, 1977, the current requirements for occupant crash protection in cars (one of those options is a passive restraint system, such as an air bag) to give consumers some kind of protection while the present standard is revised.

Send your comments to Secretary of Transportation, Washington, DC 20590. Identify envelope as comments on FMVSS 208. For more details on air bags, see **CONSUMER NEWS**: Aug. 1 & **CONSUMER REGISTER**: July 1.

FTC report

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has accepted agreements containing consent orders that require 2 national organizations of doctors—American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) & American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists (ACOG), both headquartered in Chicago—to discontinue relative-value scale activities since the scales may influence the fees their members [doctors] charge. A relative-value scale lists numerical values for surgical & medical procedures & services; values are usually stated in non-monetary units, but they can be converted to a fee schedule by applying a dollar conversion factor to them. FTC says that the publication of a relative-value scale makes it convenient for doctors to fix prices across the board—meaning all members of AAOS & ACOG could charge the same fee for a procedure or service merely by agreeing on a uniform conversion factor.

FTC's orders require that AAOS & ACOG:

1. Stop publishing & participating in the development of relative-value scales.
2. Withdraw those relative value scales that they have already published.
3. Distribute a copy of FTC's complaint & order to each of its members [doctors], to all Blue Cross & Blue Shield plans, to the offices responsible for the administration of Medicare & Medicaid & to the major companies writing health insurance.
4. Instruct members to return relative value scales to AAOS & ACOG.

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